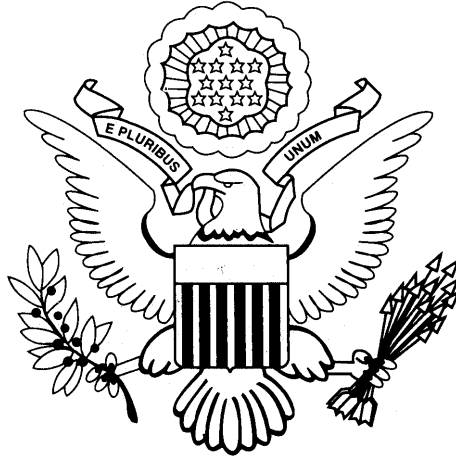


# **YOUR PASSPORT**



## **TO A SAFE TRIP ABROAD**

### **SECURITY TIPS FOR TRAVELING ABROAD**

#### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Each year, hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens travel abroad either for business or pleasure. For most people, foreign travel is a positive, rewarding experience. For the few who experience security or safety-related problems, a lack of planning and general awareness are often contributing factors. Whether you are an experienced or first-time foreign traveler, you should take your personal safety and security seriously. Good security habits won't detract from your travel but will instead serve to enhance it.

This booklet contains security reminders to help individuals avoid pitfalls while traveling overseas. It is not a substitute for a Defensive Travel Briefing which all affiliates who are traveling abroad are required to receive. Check with your security office for additional travel information and specific briefing requirements.

#### **BEFORE YOU GO**

The preparations you make before you depart for your trip will depend upon the destination, length, and purpose of your trip. Before leaving, be sure to confirm lodging and travel reservations and obtain traveler's checks. Unless anonymity is an issue, also leave a copy of your itinerary with a relative or close friend. You should take with you pertinent information regarding health insurance coverage which might be useful in an emergency. In addition, you will need certain official documents and perhaps vaccination information for some areas. The following page contains a checklist which will help you prepare for your trip.

## **CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Learn about the places you plan to visit. Familiarize yourself with local laws and customs in those areas. Information can be obtained from your public library, local travel agency or the U.S. State Department.
- ✓ Leave behind any government identification (badges, security passes, phone numbers, etc.) which are not necessary for the trip.
- ✓ Ensure that you have all official documents, i.e., passport, shot records, official orders, international driver's license, etc.
- ✓ Grant power of attorney to an immediate relative/close friend. Complete or update your will to include naming a guardian for any minor children.
- ✓ Establish a point of contact for your family to call in an emergency.
- ✓ Carry an extra set of eyeglasses and any necessary medications, along with a copy of the prescription and the generic name of the drug, in your carry-on luggage. Keep all medications in their original containers.

## **DURING YOUR STAY IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY**

### **CARRY IDENTIFICATION**

Make copies of your airline ticket, passport Identification page, driver's license and the credit cards you take with you. Carry this record in a separate place from the originals. This will help speed the replacement process if these documents are lost or stolen.

Take all essential personal and medical Identification to get you successfully through your trip.

Do not leave your wallet or purse unattended.

### **PASSPORT PROTECTION**

Your passport is the most significant identification you will carry. This is your proof of U.S. citizenship while traveling abroad. Travelers should be warned that passport theft, particularly of American tourist passports, is on the increase. You should treat your passport with the utmost care and protect it as you would your wallet. Take extra precautions to protect your passport as its loss or theft may cause you unnecessary travel complications as well as significant expense.

To minimize potential loss or theft, it is recommended that you carry your passport in a front pants pocket or in a pouch hidden in your clothes. The only time your passport should leave your possession is if your hotel requires you to leave it at the desk during your stay. Some areas use this procedure to register you with the local police—a routine policy. Don't forget to ask for a receipt and be very sure to retrieve your passport before continuing your trip.

Use discretion in displaying this document, as it could draw undue attention to you. Memorizing your passport number and other essential information will help you avoid flashing your passport around when

filling out items such as landing cards and hotel registration forms. If your passport is lost or stolen abroad, report the situation IMMEDIATELY to the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and to the local police authorities. Again, having copies of your passport identification page and/or birth certificate will help speed the replacement process.

## **ESTABLISH POINTS OF CONTACT**

Establishing a point of contact is important. Someone should know your whereabouts from the time you depart the U.S. until you return home. Provide your contact with a detailed copy of your itinerary and advise him/her of any changes.

If you are traveling on business, you should establish a point of contact in the country you are visiting. Be sure to carry that person's name and phone number with you.

Depending on your personal circumstances or if your travel involves an extended stay, it may be advisable to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. This will make it easier should someone at home need to locate you urgently or in the unlikely event that you need to be evacuated due to an emergency.

## **KEEP A LOW PROFILE**

You need to use common sense and be extra conscious of your appearance and actions so that you don't attract unwanted attention. Take a good look at the items you plan to take with you such as clothing, jewelry and even religious items. This is especially true for reading materials that may be considered offensive. Keep in mind that certain items may not be appropriate for other areas.

Avoid clothing and other outward vestiges which unnecessarily advertise that you are an American citizen. Wear nondescript, casual apparel which enables you to blend in as well as possible. Leave behind the NFL sweatshirts, major league baseball caps and western apparel.

Members of the armed forces should avoid wearing their military uniform unless required to do so.

## **SHUN PUBLICITY**

Shun publicity and inquiries by the local news media. If approached by the media, remember not to disclose any information relating to yourself or other government personnel and to report such contacts.

Discussing personal and background information concerning family members with foreigners should also be avoided.

## **AVOID CIVIL DISTURBANCES**

Every effort should be made to avoid civil disturbances and disputes with local citizens.

Use caution if you come upon a demonstration or a rally. If the speaker is denouncing U.S. policy, the crowd could become hostile to any American bystanders. Should violence break out, arrests are sometimes made indiscriminately. In the confusion you could be arrested or detained even though you are only an “innocent bystander”.

## **LOCAL LAWS**

Remember that although you are an American citizen, you are subject to the laws of the country in which you are traveling. Don't assume that what is acceptable in the United States is acceptable abroad.

For example, in many countries, individuals are prohibited from making derogatory comments about the government or government leaders.

Taking photographs of government facilities and religious symbols is also prohibited in many countries. Therefore, be aware of the local laws and as a general rule, do not attempt to take photographs in the vicinity of foreign military bases or buildings.

## **MONEY MATTERS**

Take most of your money in international traveler's checks. Do not carry large amounts of cash.

Plan ahead to ensure that you will have enough foreign currency for the expenses you anticipate during your first day in country. It is advisable to exchange some money to cover such essentials as taxi fares, meals, tips, etc.

Do not count on currency exchanges at foreign airports being open 24 hours a day. Local banks usually offer the best rates, although hotel money exchanges may be more convenient.

Always deal with reputable, established currency exchanges; in many countries it is illegal to do otherwise. If you deal with people on the street who offer you an “unbelievable deal”, you run the risk of getting counterfeit currency or being arrested for involvement in black market activity.

Be sure to keep track of all your transactions. Each time you cash a traveler's check record the serial number, denomination, date and location of purchase. Keep this in a separate place so replacement checks can be issued quickly if they are lost or stolen.

Safeguard all credit cards as well as customer copies of each credit card transaction you make. Any credit cards which are unnecessary or invalid overseas (e.g., gasoline credit cards) should be left behind.

## **AIRPORT SAFETY**

Once you have landed, proceed directly to the baggage claim and customs areas. Keep a low profile and when processing through customs be courteous and cooperative.

Stay alert, check out emergency exits and keep your distance from unattended luggage.

Do not leave your own belongings unattended.

Never, as a favor or otherwise, agree to carry a package for a stranger.

Exit the airport as quickly as possible.

## **PERSONAL SAFETY**

Always be conscious of your surroundings and avoid any areas you believe may put your personal safety at risk.

Be especially careful not to flash large sums of money. It is also best to leave your valuables (anything of high monetary or sentimental value that you can't afford to lose or will be unable to replace) such as jewelry or expensive luggage at home.

Avoid known high crime areas and never travel alone after dark.

When traveling on foot, walk only on well-lighted, heavily-traveled streets whenever possible. Avoid shortcuts through alleys or side streets. Walk in the middle of the sidewalk and secure your belongings.

Be wary of street vendors and innocent-looking youngsters. It has been reported that while one person has your attention, someone else may be picking your pocket.

Should you be approached by a suspicious looking person on foot, cross the street or change direction. If you are threatened by the occupants of a car, move in the direction opposite to that in which the car is traveling.

Learn a few phrases in the local language so you can obtain assistance if needed. You should also learn how to use the public telephone and carry the coins necessary to do so.

Remain alert and if you have a problem go to the local police department.

## **HOTEL SAFETY**

Avoid taking a street level room. Choose a room between the second and eighth floors, i.e., too high for easy outside access and low enough to be reached by fire equipment.

Use elevators rather than stairwells. Stand near the control panel so if threatened, you can push the alarm button.

Locate exits within the hotel and develop a plan in case of fire or other emergency.

Report lost keys immediately and consider changing rooms.

When in the hotel room, secure the door and windows and keep them locked. When you leave your room, don't leave indicators showing that you are out. In fact, leave the television or radio on, giving the impression that the room is occupied. Don't leave anything of value (money, tickets, camera, etc.) in your room when you go out, even if it is locked in your suitcase.

Don't accept deliveries to your room unless previously arranged and you are certain of the source and contents.

Keep your room key with you instead of leaving it at the front desk.

In some countries, you may be required to leave your passport at the hotel reception desk overnight so it can be checked by local police officials. These are normal procedures required by local laws. Be sure to obtain a receipt for your passport and any valuables you leave in the hotel safe.

## **DRIVING OVERSEAS**

Check with the Automobile Association of America (AAA) if you plan to drive while overseas to determine whether you will need an international driver's license. While some countries do not recognize U.S. driver's licenses, most do accept international driver's licenses and the latter are often required by foreign car rental agencies.

Check with your insurance company before you leave to make certain you're covered for driving while overseas. In some instances, supplemental insurance may be needed.

Drive carefully while you are abroad! Many countries deal harshly with foreigners who are involved in traffic accidents. Drivers are often detained in jail while such accidents are investigated.

Take care not to speed as some countries impose a speeding fine which is payable when levied. Also, in some areas it is unlawful to use insulting language toward another person or to use abusive gestures while driving.

## **VEHICLE SAFETY**

Avoid selecting cars that mark you as an "important foreigner". Rental cars are easy to spot so don't choose a large, flashy vehicle.

Make sure the car is in good repair and always keep your gas tank at least half full.

Always drive with the doors locked and the windows up.

Be cautious of anything that causes you to make an abnormal stop.

Never pick up hitchhikers and if you come across an accident, drive to the nearest telephone or police station to report it.

Always lock your car when unattended and avoid leaving valuables in the car even if locked in the glove box or trunk.

Inspect your vehicle for tampering inside and out. If you suspect a problem, keep clear of the vehicle and contact the authorities.

## **DEALING WITH PROBLEMS**

### **ILLNESS OR MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

Carry a summary of your medical history, to include past illnesses, allergies, and blood type.

Carry an ample supply of any prescription medication you are required to take. It is also recommended that you take along an extra prescription in case you need a refill. Be sure to ask for the generic name of any prescription drug as brand names differ in other countries.

Always leave medicines in the original labeled containers.

Check with your medical insurance agent to make sure your medical expenses will be covered if you incur an injury or illness while traveling abroad.

To help prevent illness while you are abroad, get a medical checkup before your trip and make sure that your immunizations are up-to-date.

Do not hesitate to seek medical assistance if you need it. Should you require medical services due to injury or serious illness, contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate where a representative is on duty 24 hours a day. This individual can provide the names of reputable physicians and hospitals which can help you avoid improper treatment and/or large medical bills. In most cases, hotel personnel also provide good advice, although there are clerks who have arrangements with unethical physicians.

## **ARRESTS**

If you are arrested for any reason, ask permission to notify the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. In some countries your request may not be honored immediately. Be persistent.

A consular officer cannot arrange for free legal aid or provide bail money for you. He/she can provide you with names of English-speaking attorneys and help you find adequate legal representation. He/she can also contact your traveling companions or relatives in the U.S., or intervene if you are receiving discriminatory treatment.

## **OTHER UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES/SITUATIONS**

During your travels, it will be most unlikely that you will ever be hijacked, kidnapped, held captive, or become a victim of terrorists or criminals. You should be aware, however, that the terrorist and criminal threat varies from country to country and that sometimes dangerous or unforeseen circumstances may occur. The information provided in the following sections is not meant to alarm you but is simply provided as guidance.

## **EVADING TERRORISTS AND CRIMINALS**

Get as much information as you can about the threat in your destination before you leave, especially if traveling to a high risk area.

It is strongly recommended that you contact the State Department for additional information prior to traveling. Recorded messages provide information and travel advisories, if warranted, for most regions of the world.

Develop and implement a security plan upon your arrival.

Don't become complacent in low risk areas. Situations sometimes change rapidly. In general, terrorists and criminals alike strike when and where they sense their targets to be most vulnerable and they are most successful when security measures are lax and daily routines are predictable.

Vary arrival times, departure times, and routes which you normally take.

Be alert to the possibility of surveillance. If you believe that you are being followed, do not challenge your follower; instead, attempt to mentally note his/her physical characteristics, type of car, license number, etc.

Promptly report such incidents to security officials at the site where you are performing your TDY or at the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

## **HIJACKING/HOSTAGE SITUATION**

Try to remain calm and alert and avoid doing anything which might attract undue attention to yourself.

Comply with orders and instructions without complaining. Keep in mind that what you say and do could impact on others.

Be as general as possible if questioned and do not discuss anything which you are obligated to protect.

Be non-threatening in conversations with your captors and avoid arguments and physical violence.

Prepare yourself for experiencing depression, boredom, and frustration since a hostage situation may continue for an indefinite period.

Try to humanize the event as much as possible. If you need anything ask for it, making your request in a reasonable low-key manner.

Try to establish a program of mental and physical activity if your situation becomes lengthy and drawn out.

Above all, rely on your inner resources and think positively.

## **A FINAL WORD DON'T BE AN UGLY AMERICAN**

Remember that our country will be judged by the impression which you make. As an American abroad, you serve as a spokesperson for the United States. Don't be surprised if you occasionally encounter antiAmerican sentiments in some foreign countries which you visit. If you wish to avoid

political discussions, state that you are not well versed on all phases of American domestic and foreign policies, then change the subject. Do not get involved in comparing other countries unfavorably with the United States. From time to time, all travelers experience frustrations such as crowded hotels, unavailable rental cars, overbooked restaurants, and delayed plane flights. Common sense and good judgment should govern your reactions in such situations. Stay calm and don't be overly critical of local customs or conditions which you find disagreeable. Be sure to report any unusual circumstances or noteworthy incidents to your Security Officer upon your return.

## **HAVE A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE TRIP**

Now that you are aware of the basic precautions which should be taken during your trip, take some time to put all this information into perspective. If you follow these precautions you will reduce the risk of encountering problems. Also, the more you learn about passports, visas, customs, immunizations and other travel basics will help you prevent problems before they occur. Additional information may be obtained by contacting the agencies listed below. It may be helpful to carry these numbers with you.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE CITIZENS EMERGENCY CENTER  
ASSISTANCE TO TRAVELERS  
(for current travel advisories)  
(202)647-5225

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MEDICAL  
ASSISTANCE TO TRAVELERS  
(for lists of English-speaking doctors practicing in  
foreign countries)  
(716)754-4883

U.S. Customs 24-Hour Emergency  
Toll Free Number  
(800)522-5220

## **TRAVEL ADVISORIES**

There are three types of State Department travel advisories:

**WARNING** - recommends deferral of travel to all or part of a country.

**CAUTION** - advises about unusual security conditions, including the potential for unexpected detention, unstable political conditions or serious health problems. (not intended to deter travel to a country).

**NOTICE** - provides information on situations that do not present a broad-scale risk, but which could result in inconvenience or difficulty for traveling Americans.

Information on a particular geographic region or specific country can be obtained by contacting the U.S. State Department. You can receive current Travel Advisory information by writing or calling the State Department.

United States Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Washington, D. C. 20520  
(202)647-5225

If you are looking for more detailed information about a particular foreign country, you might want to send away for “Background Notes”. “Background Notes” are pamphlets containing current information on some 170 countries and geographic areas around the world. Each pamphlet describes the country’s people, culture, geography, history, government, economy, and political conditions. To receive “Background Notes”, send \$1.00 for each country to:

Background Notes  
Superintendent of Documents  
U.S. Government Printing Office  
Washington, DC 20402

**ENJOY YOUR TRIP!**